



Childhood Policies Promoting Population Health: Where does Latin America Stand?

Childhood Policies: Mediating Effects on Health

Education: Policies that reduce access barriers to education and increase the quality of teaching mediate population health through different pathways. The health benefits of increasing educational attainment have been thoroughly documented by a large body of research.

- Completing a secondary education is associated with better physical and mental health, longer life expectancy, lower rates of depression, and a lower risk of experiencing cognitive impairment. ¹
- The socioeconomic advantages associated with higher educational attainment, such as income, better housing, and access to clean water and sanitation, have an important impact on the overall health of parents and children. ²

Child Marriage: Child marriage disproportionately affects girls, jeopardizing girls' health due to abuse, limited control over their own bodies and their sexual and reproductive health decisions, and early pregnancy and childbearing.

- Inequities in age and power differences often characterize marriages involving young girls, who tend to be married to men who are significantly older. Higher rates of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse within marriage have been documented among women married as children compared to women married as adults. ³
- Evidence indicates that early marriage accounts for between 12 and 22 percent of school dropouts among girls in sub-Saharan Africa. ⁴
- Findings from East Asia show the impact of early marriage on girls' learning: for each year that marriage was delayed, girls were 5.6% more likely to be literate. ⁵

Child Labor: According to the ILO, approximately 152 million children aged 5 to 17 are subject to child labor. Studies show that child laborers around the world tend to have poorer health and complete less education than children who do not work.

- Studies have found that adults who had worked between the ages of 6 and 14 were 40 percent more likely to have health problems as adults compared to their non-working counterparts. ⁶
- Studies from dozens of countries around the world have found that as the number of hours spent on market or domestic work increases, children's school attendance decreases. ⁷

Areas of Strength

- Schooling is free through the completion of secondary school in all but one country in the region for which data are available.
- Every country in the region for which data are available set the legislated minimum age of marriage for boys and girls at 18 years of age.
- Hazardous work is prohibited for children under the age of 18 in 25 of the 31 countries for which data are available.

Areas Needing Action

- In 28 countries, or 88% of the region, girls are allowed to marry with parental consent before the age of 18. In 17 of these countries girls are allowed to marry at 15 years of age or younger with parental consent.
- In 14 countries, nearly half the region, girls are permitted to marry with parental consent at a minimum age younger than that of boys, reinforcing the gender inequities inherent in early marriage.
- In 13 countries, or 42% of the region, children are allowed to perform hazardous work before the age of 18 if legal loopholes are taken into account.

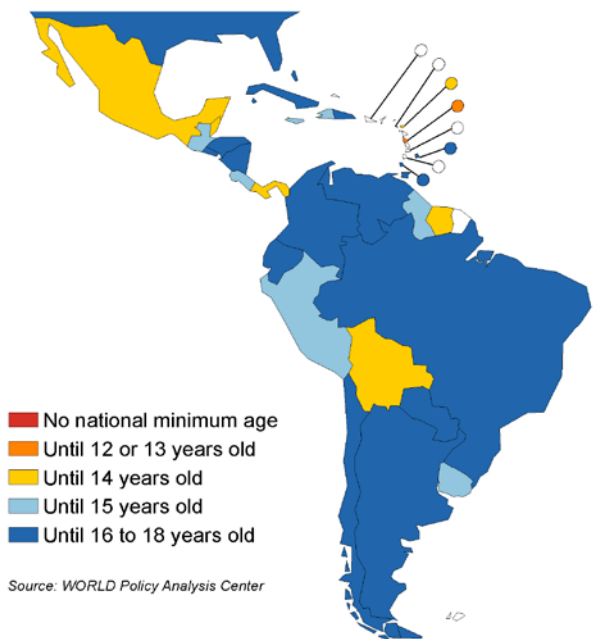
What is the minimum age of marriage for girls with parental consent?



Is there a gender disparity in the minimum legal age of marriage with parental consent?



How long are children protected from full-time work?



How long are children protected from hazardous work when legal loopholes are considered?



Education maps show policies in place as of June 2014 as documented in country reports submitted by governments to UNESCO by that time. Child marriage maps reflect laws in place as of June 2013 and contained in legislation available at that time in legal repositories, including the International Labour Organization’s NATLEX, Lexadin’s World Law Guide, and the Foreign Law Guide. Child labor maps reflect laws in place as of March 2012 and available at that time through the International Labour Organization’s NATLEX. If you are aware of relevant policy or legislation updates, please contact Nicolas de Guzman at ndeguzman@ph.ucla.edu.

	<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	<i>Rest of the World</i>	<i>Countries for which data are available</i>
<i>Is completing secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?</i>			
Tuition reported	1 (4%)	39 (29%)	
Tuition-free, but not compulsory	16 (57%)	77 (58%)	161
Tuition-free and compulsory	11 (39%)	17 (13%)	
<i>What is the minimum age of marriage for girls with parental consent?</i>			
No minimum age	1 (3%)	5 (3%)	
9 to 13 years old	3 (9%)	3 (2%)	191
14 to 15 years old	13 (41%)	17 (11%)	

16 to 17 years old	11 (34%)	46 (29%)	
18 years old or older	4 (13%)	88 (55%)	
<i>Is there a gender disparity in the minimum age of marriage with parental consent?</i>			
No minimum age for girls and boys	1 (3%)	5 (3%)	
Girls can be married 3 to 4 years younger than boys	2 (6%)	15 (10%)	190
Girls can be married 1 to 2 years younger than boys	12 (38%)	30 (19%)	
No difference in minimum age	17 (53%)	108 (68%)	
<i>How long are children protected from full-time work?</i>			
No national minimum age	0 (0%)	6 (4%)	
Until 12 or 13 years old	1 (3%)	4 (3%)	
Until 14 years old	6 (20%)	23 (15%)	180
Until 15 years old	7 (23%)	56 (37%)	
Until 16 to 18 years old	16 (53%)	61 (41%)	
<i>How long are children protected from hazardous work when legal loopholes are considered?</i>			
No national minimum age	1 (3%)	10 (7%)	
Until 12 - 14 years old	5 (16%)	13 (9%)	
Until 15 years old	3 (10%)	17 (12%)	176
Until 16 or 17 years old	4 (13%)	30 (21%)	
Until 18 years old	18 (58%)	75 (52%)	

About WORLD: The WORLD Policy Analysis Center aims to improve the quantity and quality of globally comparative data on policies affecting human health, development, well-being, and equity. With this data, WORLD informs policy debates, facilitates comparative studies of policy progress, feasibility, and effectiveness, and advances efforts to hold decision-makers accountable.

¹ A. Chevalier, L. Feinstein. Sheepskin or Prozac: The causal effect of education on mental health Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning Discussion Paper No. 71 (2006); A. Lievre, D. Alley, E. Crimmins. Educational differentials in life expectancy with cognitive impairment among the elderly in the United States Journal of Aging and Health, 20 (4) (2008), pp. 456-477; E. Roos, E. Lahelma, M. Virtanen, R. Prättälä, P. Pientinen. Gender, socioeconomic status and family status as determinants of food behavior Social Science & Medicine, 46 (12) (1998), pp. 1519-1529; D.P. Goldman, J.P. Smith Can patient self-management help explain the SES health gradient? Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 99 (16) (2002), pp. 10929-10934

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⁴ C.B. Lloyd and B.S. Mensch, "Marriage and Childbirth as Factors in Dropping out of School: An Analysis of DHS Data from Sub-Saharan Africa," *Population Studies* 62, no. 1 (2008): 1–13.; T. Tuwor and M.-A. Sossou, "Gender Discrimination and Education in West Africa: Strategies for Maintaining Girls in School," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 12, no. 4 (2008): 363–379

⁵ E. Field and A. Ambrus, "Early Marriage, Age of Menarche, and Female Schooling Attainment in Bangladesh," *Journal of Political Economy* 166, no. 5 (2008): 881–930.

⁶ Rosati and Straub, "Does Work during Childhood Affect the Health of Guatemalan Adults?"; A.ºL. Kassouf, M. McKee, and E. Mossialos, "Early Entrance to the Job Market and Its Effect on Adult Health," *Health Policy and Planning* 16, no. 1 (2001): 21–28.

⁷ Ray R. (2002). The determinants of child labour and child schooling in Ghana. *Journal of African Economies*, 11(4), 561-590. Ray, "Determinants of Child Labor and Child Schooling in Ghana," cited in Edmonds, "Defining Child Labor," 34.; Defining Child Labor: A Review of the Definitions of Child Labor Used in Academic and Policy Research, International Labour Organization, 2008; H. Phoumin, "Human Capital and Hours Worked of Children in Cambodia: Empirical Evidence for Policy Implications," *Asian Economic Journal* 22, no. 1 (2008): 25–46.